

Report 108-187 - DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS BILL, 2004

ADDITIONAL VIEWS

The Defense Subcommittee is perhaps the most bipartisan of all of the Appropriations subcommittees, and the Appropriations Committee is the most bipartisan committee in the House. It is in that Spirit I raise a matter of deadly importance--a matter about which many members have raised concerns and all members should be aware. It involves intelligence, specifically the intelligence gathering and analysis used in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The following discussion is based largely on published reports that purportedly relied on interviews with intelligence officials and military officers. While no one on the Committee can know with certainty the extent to which those reports are accurate--and we do not now have enough information to reach specific conclusions--the Committee staff's review of these reports find much of what was reported to be credible.

In addition to the CIA, which is an independent agency, there are four major intelligence organizations inside the Department of Defense. All of these entities are funded in this bill. The press stories referred to above argue that a group of civilian employees in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), some of whom are political appointees, have long been dissatisfied with the information produced by the established intelligence agencies both inside and outside of the Department. This was particularly true with respect to the situation in Iraq and the reports that these agencies produced regarding Sadaam Hussein, his regime, and the general political and military situation in that country.

As a result a special operation was established within the Office of the Secretary of Defense's Office of Special Plans. This cadre of handpicked officials was charged with collecting, vetting, and disseminating intelligence information outside of the normal intelligence apparatus. In fact, it appears that information collected by this office was, in some instances, not shared with established intelligence agencies and, further, passed on to the National Security Council and the President not having been vetted with anyone other than certain OSD political appointees. Perhaps most troubling of all, the articles claim that the purpose of this operation was not only to develop intelligence supporting the cadre's pre-held views about Iraq, but to intimidate analysts in the established intelligence organizations to produce information that supported policy decisions which they had already decided to propose.

There is considerable discussion regarding the intelligence about weapons of mass destruction. It would be unfortunate if this issue were subsumed by the question of whether or not Hussein had such weapons. First, we don't know at this point, but my personal suspicion is that he did. Second, measuring the quality of our intelligence operations requires more than simply determining whether the data collection and analysis on any single issue--like the WMD issue--was right or wrong. For instance, did we reach the right conclusion based on good information or by happenstance?

The allegations made in these reports go well beyond the issue of WMD to the integrity of our intelligence operations overall. To wit: It appears that the office in question also challenged the intelligence community's estimates on the number of troops that would be required for a successful invasion. OSD political appointees maintained regular contact with sources in the Iraqi National Congress who in turn maintained contact with sources inside of Iraq. Based on information obtained from these sources, the political appointees argued that the conclusions of the Intelligence Community, the Joint Chiefs and, in particular, Army Chief of Staff General Eric Shinseki were in error, and that the invasion could be successfully carried out with fewer than 50,000 troops. While the Chiefs eventually deployed most of the troops they requested, it appears that the invasion was both lighter than they would have desired and lighter than what was required: the inability to fully protect supply lines may have resulted in the loss of life; and, the shortage of available personnel did in fact leave certain critical sites such as nuclear facilities unprotected.

This is incredibly serious business. Understanding what we did or did not do that we should have done in Iraq is important, but it is far more important with respect to shaping what we will do in the future. How will the intelligence that the President and Congress will use to make policy decisions about Korea be assembled? Will the long established mechanisms to collect, evaluate, and disseminate intelligence be used or will we again fall back on the ad hoc efforts of this self appointed group of experts?

It is important to note that the Secretary has now established a new office led by the Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence. This office will have more than 100 people and it is widely believed in the intelligence community that the office was created for the express purpose of pressuring analysts to produce information that supports predetermined policies. Will this office stand between our war fighters and the information they need? Will the Undersecretary compete with the Director of Central Intelligence, undermining the Director's statutory responsibility to coordinate our foreign intelligence?

The committee is responsible for approving the funding for these programs--we should have the answers.

We should remember that the National Security Act of 1946 placed all intelligence activities under the control of one man, the Director of Central Intelligence. General Hoyt Vandenberg, who himself served as the DCI, explained that decision in testimony before Congress.

[The Joint Congressional Committee to Investigate the Pearl Harbor attack found failures] which went to the very structure of our intelligence organizations . . . the failure to coordinate the collection and dissemination of intelligence; the failure to centralize intelligence functions of common concern to more than one department of the Government, which could more efficiently be performed centrally.

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